



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## VABHHCS FOUR CHAPLAINS MEMORIAL SERVICE

VA Black Hills Health Care System invites the public to attend the Four Chaplains Memorial Service at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, February 11, at the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1049 Howard Street in Sturgis.

Local veteran organizations will participate in the event by placing wreaths at the altar during the program. Immediately following the service the public is invited to a chili feed to be served at the Sturgis Veterans Club, 868 Main Street in Sturgis.

The Dakota Choral Union (DCU) will perform during the service. The DCU organization supports and encourages quality choral music in the Black Hills region.

The Four Chaplains Memorial Service honors four Army Chaplains - Lt. George L. Fox, Methodist; Lt. Alexander D. Goode, Jewish; Lt. John P. Washington, Roman Catholic; and Lt. Clark V. Poling, Reformed Church of America, - four men of different faiths, on a rapidly sinking ship, who gave their life jackets and lives so that younger soldiers might survive when the USS Dorchester was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine on February 3, 1943.



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# SFVAHCS ARTS FESTIVAL

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System will host the annual Veterans and VA Employees Arts & Crafts competition on Thursday, January 25, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (CT) in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor auditorium of the medical center.

As part of the VA's National Salute to Veteran Patients - designated to pay tribute and express appreciation to veterans - the exhibit will include visual arts ranging from paintings to photography to woodworking, jewelry, kits and more.

Veterans, family members, VA staff, volunteers and the Sioux Falls area community are invited to attend the event to view the art, meet the artists, and to also attend the awards reception at 2:00 PM.

Medical facilities, like the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System, use creative arts as a form of rehabilitation to help veterans cope with physical and emotional disabilities. Each year veterans compete in local competition and are also encouraged to submit their pieces for judging to the National Veterans Creative Arts competition. Select winners are invited to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in October in Iowa.

VA employees will also display their arts and crafts during the show but will not compete with veterans.

For more information, contact Shirley Redmond at 605-333-6889 or Diane Larsen at 605-336-3230, Ext. 9-6418.

# VABHHCS ARTS FESTIVAL

VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) is seeking entries for their annual creative arts competition. This is an exciting opportunity for Veterans to demonstrate their skills in visual arts, creative writing, and performing arts.

Veterans enrolled at VABHHCS or a resident in a state veteran's home are eligible to compete. The art must have been created after April 1, 2017, with an exception for Military Combat Experience entries. All submissions must be received by the February 16<sup>th</sup> deadline to compete in the Fort Meade show or by March 2<sup>nd</sup> to compete in the Hot Springs show.

The public is invited to view entries at each competition. The Fort Meade show is March 7, 2018, in Building 145, Classroom 108 from 1:00pm to 3:00pm, and on March 14, 2018, in the Domiciliary Auditorium from 2:00pm to 4:30pm at the Hot Springs VA.

The competition includes 51 categories in the visual arts division that range from oil painting to leatherwork to paint-by-number kits. In addition, there are 100 categories in the performing arts division including all aspects of music, dance, drama, and creative writing. A panel of local artists will judge entries based on creativity, skill, originality, and overall presentation. Select winners at the local level are invited to compete at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Iowa.

The purpose of the National Veterans Creative Arts competition is to recognize veterans for their creative and artistic ability and to demonstrate the therapeutic benefits of the arts.

Creative art therapy is recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities as one form of rehabilitative treatment to help veterans recover from and cope with physical and emotional disabilities.

For rules and registration information, please contact Mike Ellis at 347-2511 extension 7658 (Fort Meade) or Mary Culbertson at 745-2000 extension 2924 (Hot Springs).

# VA TO PARTNER WITH HHS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced a partnership to share data, data analytics tools and best practices for identifying and preventing fraud, waste and abuse.

This newest partnership enhances ongoing efforts between the country's two largest public-private health-care payment organizations to help America's veterans by leveraging the gains made by CMS.

"The VA-HHS alliance represents the latest example of the VA's commitment to find partners to assist with identifying new and innovative ways to seek out fraud, waste and abuse and ensure every tax dollar given to the VA supports veterans," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "This effort marks another step toward achieving President Trump's 10-point plan to reform the VA by collaborating with our federal partners to improve the VA's ability to investigate fraud and wrongdoing in VA programs."

CMS continues to focus on reducing and eliminating fraud, waste and abuse in Medicare, and in 2010, it established the Center for Program Integrity to help with this work. CMS estimates that its program integrity activities saved Medicare operations \$17 billion in fiscal 2015. Other HHS combined efforts — including law enforcement — contributed to greater program savings.

The VA plans to capitalize on the advancements in analytics CMS has made by concentrating on its use of advanced technology, statistics and data analytics to improve fraud detection and prevention efforts. Additionally, in November 2017, the VA invited industry experts to provide information on the latest commercial sector tools and techniques to enhance the VA's fraud detection capabilities. In April, the VA will invite these industry experts to demonstrate their capabilities for detecting and preventing fraud, waste and abuse and recovering improper payments.

"We have a special obligation to keep America's promise to those who have served our country and ensure that veterans receive high-quality and accessible health care," said CMS Administrator Seema Verma. "CMS is sharing lessons learned and expertise to support the VA to identify waste and fraud and eliminate these abuses of the public trust. Using state-of-the-art data analytics, CMS is partnering with the VA to better detect and prevent wrongdoing in its programs."

By using CMS' successes in its program integrity protocols, the VA will be able to close existing gaps in its own claims payment process.



# PURPLE HEART MEDAL PRESENTATION

Sylvan Vigness, 94, of Flandreau, will be presented his long overdue Purple Heart Medal on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2018, in Flandreau at 2:00 pm (CT). The presentation will be made at the Flandreau Community Center, 800 W. Community Drive.

Vigness is a World War II veteran whose family has spent two decades working with previous congressional offices to obtain the Purple Heart Medal following an injury he suffered in the Pacific Theatre on his ship, the U.S.S. Hinsdale.



## VETERANS LEGAL SERVICES

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care Center will be hosting Drop-in Legal Service programs for veterans in Watertown and Sioux Falls.

The Watertown event will be held Thursday, March 22, from 9:00 am—3:00 pm at the Watertown National Guard Armory. The Sioux Falls event will be held Friday, March 23, from 9:00 am—3:00 pm at the DAV in Sioux Falls.

## SFVAHCS TOWN HALL

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care Center (VA) will be hosting a Town Hall for veterans, their families, and community residents on Tuesday, March 6 at 5:00 PM in the VA auditorium.

VA staff will also be available from 4:00-5:00 PM to answer veterans' individual questions or assist in applying for health care enrollment or disability benefits. In addition, the VA will be hosting a national women Veteran athlete exhibit that day.

# VA COLLABORATES WITH PINK CONCUSSIONS GROUP

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a collaboration between its National Center for PTSD and the nonprofit organization PINK Concussions, encouraging women to donate their brains for the purpose of research of the effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“In the past, the focus of TBI and PTSD brain research has primarily been based on male brains — without any active recruitment for women,” said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, executive in charge of VA’s Veterans Health Administration. “We have a lot to learn about how the female brain deals with TBI and PTSD, which makes this effort long overdue.”

Katherine Snedaker, founder and executive director of PINK Concussions, and a brain injury survivor, also applauded the collaboration.

“We are so grateful to partner with the VA to launch the first active recruitment of female veterans, as well as active-duty members and civilian women to be a part of brain injury and PTSD research,” Snedaker said. “The VA continues year after year to be one of our most valued partners in our ongoing mission to improve pre-injury education and post-injury care for women with brain injury.”

While there is postmortem brain tissue available for study of injury in men, there has been almost none for women. There is also a lack of research on Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, also known as CTE, in women. In all published literature on CTE, only two peer-reviewed journal articles (both published in the early 1990s) have focused on women.

Women Veterans interested in participating in the brain bank may take the [PINK Concussions pledge](#). Though tissue donation may occur many years or decades from now, enrollment will allow researchers to learn as much as possible about the health of an enrolled female participant and how things may change over the years.

For more information about the effort, visit [www.pinkconcussions.com/](http://www.pinkconcussions.com/). For more information about the VA’s National PTSD Brain Bank, visit [www.research.va.gov/programs/tissue\\_banking/PTSD/default.cfm](http://www.research.va.gov/programs/tissue_banking/PTSD/default.cfm) or call 800-762-6609.

## PINK CONCUSSIONS





# UPCOMING EVENTS

2018

Jan 28-29—VFW Legislative Conference—Ft. Pierre AmericInn  
Jan 29—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Ft. Pierre—6:00 pm—7:30 pm (CT)  
Feb 11—VABHHCS Four Chaplain Service—St. Francis Catholic Church—1:30 pm (MT)  
Feb 16-18—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma  
Feb 23-25—Vietnam Veterans & Era Reunion—Ramada Inn—Mitchell  
Mar 4-8—National VFW Conference—Washington, DC  
Mar 6—SFVAHCS Town Hall—Sioux Falls VA Auditorium—5:00 pm (CT)  
Mar 13—VABHHCS Veteran Town Hall and Outreach—Newcastle Senior Center—8:00 am (MT)  
Mar 13—VABHHCS Veteran Town Hall and Outreach—Sundance Senior Center—1:00 pm (MT)  
Mar 22—Veterans Legal Services—Watertown National Guard Armory—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)  
Mar 23—Veterans Legal Services—Sioux Falls DAV—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)  
Apr 27-29—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood  
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish  
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls  
Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV  
Jul 21-25—VFW National Convention—Kansas City, MO  
Jul 26—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre  
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre  
Aug 20-24—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN



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